

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 635

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HA

SUBJECT: POLITICS OF HAITI'S STAMP SCANDAL

REF: P-AU-P 620 AND PREVIOUS

1. ALTHOUGH THE HAITIAN PRESS HAS CARRIED FAIRLY FULL ACCOUNTS OF THE PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND PROFESSED OBJECTIVITY OF MINISTER OF JUSTICE JEANTY'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE GREAT AUDUBON STAMP SCANDAL, TWO BASIC QUESTIONS REMAIN:

(A) WHY WOULD SO INTELLIGENT AND POLITICALLY ASTUTE A MAN AS FOURCAND PERMIT HIMSELF TO PARTICIPATE IN SO CLUMSY A FRAUD, AND ONE THAT WAS BOUND TO HAVE BEEN UNCOVERED AS SOON AS THE STAMP ISSUE WAS WIDELY CIRCULATED?

(B) WILL THE UNFOLDING SCANDAL HAVE REPERCUSSIONS ON THE POWER BALANCE IN THE PALACE AND ON THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY?

2. THE QUESTION OF FOURCAND'S GUILT.

(A) NOTHING IN JEANTY'S ACCOUNT TO THE AMBASSADOR OF THE FRAUD HAS IMPLICATED FOURCAND, NOR DO OTHER AVAILABLE REPORTS TIE HIM PERSONALLY TO THE AFFAIR IN ANY WAY. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR SAW FOURCAND ON HIS LAST DAY IN OFFICE MARCH 7, FOLLOWING TWO DAYS OF INTENSIVE QUESTIONING, FOURCAND WAS, AS USUAL, POISED AND AFFABLE. HE DID NOT ACT IN THE LEAST LIKE A MAN WHO FEARED THE IMMINENT DESTRUCTION OF HIS REPUTATION. IN A CABINET OFFICE WHERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRAFT ARE LEGION, FOURCAND COULD

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HAVE DONE MUCH BETTER THAN A FRAUDULENT STAMP ISSUE HAD HE

BEEN INTERESTED IN MONEY.

(B) MOREOVER, FOURCAND HAD MUCH TO LOSE BY TAKING THE CORRUPTION ROUTE, OR AT LEAST IN TAKING IT TOO SOON -- A DOMINANT POSITION IN THE CABINET, THE SPECIAL CONFIDENCE, EVEN AFFECTION, OF THE PRESIDENT, AND PROSPECTS FOR EVEN HIGHER CABINET OFFICE IN THE FUTURE. FOURCAND HAD IDENTIFIED HIMSELF FIRMLY WITH THE THIRD WORLD ASPIRATIONS OF MANY YOUNGER TECHNOCRATS AND UNIVERSITY-TRAINED ECONOMISTS. WITH MANY A DIALECTICAL TWIST AND TURN, HE HAD MANAGED TO BALANCE BETWEEN AN ASSERTIVE NATIONALISM INTENT ON MAKING UP FOR TIME AND OPPORTUNITIES LOST TO HAITI IN THE SIXTIES, AND A DUE DEFERENCE FOR DUVALIERIST ORTHODOXY.

(C) DESPITE SOME ERRORS -- HIS SPONSORSHIP OF A MEASURE TO DECOUPLE THE GOURDE FROM THE DOLLAR AND HIS PURCHASE OF PETROLEUM LAST YEAR AT PRICES AND IN AMOUNTS THAT TURNED OUT TO BE EXCESSIVE -- FOURCAND'S BATTING AVERAGE WAS HIGH, AND HIS PROSPECTS SEEMED BRIGHT AFTER HIS ROUT OF THE REYNOLDS NEGOTIATORS IN DECEMBER.

(D) ON THE FACE OF IT, THEREFORE, WE WOULD THINK IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT FOURCAND WOULD HAVE THROWN ALL THIS AWAY IN AN AMATEURISH ATTEMPT TO DEFRAUD THE STATE.

3. IF FOURCAND WAS MADE SCAPEGOAT, WHOSE INTERESTS WERE SERVED? THIS MOVES TO THE NEXT QUESTION: IN WHOSE INTEREST WAS FOURCAND'S DISMISSAL?

(A) WE KNOW THAT FOURCAND WAS CORDIALLY DETESTED BY SICLAIT AND THAT EACH REGARDED THE OTHER AS AN IMPLACABLE RIVAL. REPORTEDLY FOURCAND DRAFTED A PLAN TO FISCALIZE THE REGIE DU TABAC THAT NEARLY HAD THE PRESIDENT'S BLESSING UNTIL SICLAIT GOT TO HIM. SICLAIT HAS BEEN PRIVY TO ALL THE MONEY-MAKING DEVICES OF THE FAMILY. IT ODD THAT, ACCORDING TO JEANTY'S ACCOUNT, THE AMERICAN STAMP DEALER, STOLOV, WAS UNABASHED WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE FALSE DOCUMENTATION, BOLD ENOUGH TO OFFER THE SET FOR SALE TO HAITI, AND CYNICAL ENOUGH TO PROTEST THAT SUCH FALSE ISSUANCES HAD BEEN CONDONED FOR YEARS, SO WHY THE FUSS NOW?

(B) SICLAIT'S ALLY AGAINST FOURCAND WAS SECRET POLICE CHIEF LUC DESIR, WHO ALSO STOOD TO LOSE BY REFORMIST NOTIONS AND WOULD INSTINCTIVELY DISTRUST ANY CABINET MINISTER WITH SUCH OBVIOUS TALENTS AND AMBITION. WE UNDERSTAND HIS SPIES HAVE BEEN WATCHING FOURCAND FOR OVER A YEAR, AND THAT DESIR IS URGING THE HARSHTEST POSSIBLE ACTION AGAINST FOURCAND.

(C) WE KNOW THAT MADAME DUVALIER REACTED NEGATIVELY TO CONFIDENTIAL

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FOURCAND'S ORIGINAL SELECTION IN AUGUST 1973, AND HAS SINCE REGULARLY SCHEMED TO ARRANGE HIS OUSTER (P-AU-P 78 OF 1/12/74). ALONG WITH SICLAIT AND DESIR, SHE RESENTED FOURCAND'S INFLUENCE OVER HER SON, AND PRESUMABLY WAS READY TO SEIZE UPON THE STAMP SCANDAL AS A PRETEXT TO REMOVE HIM.

(D) THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF REPORTEDLY WAS PERSONALLY FOND OF FOURCAND AND HAS RESISTED ALL PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO HAVE HIM REMOVED. HOWEVER, WHEN FACED WITH EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE MALFEASANCE

IN A TRUSTED BUT PERSISTENTLY CONTROVERSIAL AIDE, THE PRESIDENT MAY HAVE THOUGHT IT ESSENTIAL TO ACT SWIFTLY AND DECISIVELY IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIS AUTHORITY AND REGAIN THE INITIATIVE.

(E) MOREOVER, FOURCAND'S SUDDENLY REVEALED VULNERABILITY OFFERED A WAY TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE WHICH HAD BEEN HANGING FIRE FOR SOME SIX WEEKS. BY THROWING FOURCAND PROMPTLY TO THE WOLVES, THE PRESIDENT MAY HAVE RECONED HE HAD A BETTER CHANCE OF RETAINING OTHER MINISTERS WHOSE REMOVAL HAD BEEN URGED BY THE PALACE REAR GUARD. WITH FOURCAND THE ONLY CHANGE, THE FORMALLY REAPPOINTED CABINET COULD BE STABILIZED FOR AT LEAST THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

(F) BUT SUCH A STRATEGY WOULD FAIL IF FOURCAND REFUSED TO ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FRAUD, OR IF HE CHOSE TO PLAY THE MARTYR. SUCH AN ACT -- AND FOURCAND IS A MASTERFUL ACTOR -- WOULD MAKE THE PRESIDENT LOOK FOOLISH, AT BEST, AND UNPRINCIPLED, AT WORST. IT MIGHT AROUSE GOSSIP AMONG THE RADICAL YOUTH THAT FOURCAND WAS BEING SACRIFICED BECAUSE THE REGIME WAS ABANDONING ITS NATIONALIST COURSE, WAS YIELDING TO FOREIGN PRESSURES AND

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ACTION ARA-06

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 635

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SPECIFICALLY TO PRESUMED U.S. DISSATISFACTION OVER THE FOURCAND ROLE IN THE REYNOLDS SETTLEMENT.

(G) ALL THIS WOULD BE HIGHLY DISTASTEFUL TO THE PALACE. IT WAS PERHAPS WITH JUST SUCH A CONTINGENCY IN MIND THAT PRESS TREATMENT OF THE CASE RECENTLY HAS SWITCHED FROM THE "VARLETS WILL HANG" MOTIF TO "LET JUSTICE BE DONE" THEME, WITH NOTES TO FOURCAND AS A BRILLIANT ECONOMIST AND TO HIS FATHER AS AN EMINENT LAWYER. A BELATED SOP TO A REPUTATION ALREADY DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR -- BUT, ASSUMING SOME SUCH PALACE STRATEGY, A LOGICAL DEFENSIVE TACTIC.

3. CONCLUSIONS: WHILE MUCH OF THE FOREGOING IS SPECULATIVE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE FOURCAND AFFAIR, HOWEVER IT IS RESOLVED, HAS CHANGED THE POLITICAL CONTEXT IN SEVERAL BASIC WAYS. BY RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S MOTIVATIONS AND AUTHORITY, THE CASE WILL ACCENTUATE DOUBTS ABOUT THE FIRMNESS OF HIS RULE, INCREASE CONCERN ABOUT THE AMBIGUOUS "FLOATING" QUALITY OF HIS STYLE, SO MUCH LESS DECISIVE THAN THAT OF HIS FATHER. IN CASTING FOURCAND IN THE ROLE OF A POTENTIAL MARTYR, THE CASE WILL FURTHER POLARIZE THE YOUNG REFORM-MINDED NATIONALISTS AGAINST THE VETERAN ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE DUVALIERISTS, AND LESSEN THE CHANCES THAT THE TWO GROUPS MIGHT FIND A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE POLICY FRAMEWORK. AND IN SETTING BACK THE CASE OF PROGRESSIVE NATIONALISM AS EMBODIED BY FOURCAND, THE DECISION WILL CREATE FURTHER STRAIN WITHIN THE PALACE ENTOURAGE AND EVEN WITHIN THE DUVALIER FAMILY ITSELF. MINISTER JEANTY HAS A DELICATE TASK AHEAD OF HIM. THE COMMEMORATION OF AUDUBON IN A FRAUDULENT STAMP ISSUE MAY PROVE MORE EXPLOSIVE THAN THE KEENEST PHILATELIST MIGHT HAVE IMAGINED.

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